

CONNECTOR SYSTEMS FOR BUILDING MATERIALS**TECHNICAL FIELD OF THE INVENTION**

THIS INVENTION relates to a connector and associated construction methods and systems and in particular but not limited to construction techniques and methods
5 concerning exterior modular building materials, typically windows.

BACKGROUND TO THE INVENTION

Many arrangements are used to connect building panels in edge to edge relation. Typical are tongue and groove arrangements. Some arrangements involve cooperating edge configurations where bridging fitting is used to secure the panels
10 together.

Australian Patent No 540685 uses a panel where the edge is and I-shaped tongue which effectively has side slots and is fitted freely into a slot with a cross shape in profile on the other panel, the cross shaped slot effectively has opposed side slots align with side in the slots in the tongue resulting in longitudinal spaces on either side
15 of the tongue and bridging the tongue and the slot. The panels are locked together by pins or rods located in the spaces thus blocking removal of the tongue.

DE2343047 connects panels using alternating hook like lobes separated by recesses. The lobes and recesses are the same width and are offset on each panel.

GB2291687 describes panel edges having lugs and recesses so the lugs fit into
20 the recesses of the other panel, each lug has a through hole and they all line up so a rod through the lugs locks the panels together.

OUTLINE OF THE INVENTION

In one aspect there is provided a connector system for connecting two members together, the connector system comprising a connector member and a connector
25 member expander, the connector member in profile having enlarged ends and a narrower intermediate section between the ends, one end having a slot to receive the

connector member expander to expand the slot so the enlarged end is biased to retentively engage a body located adjacent the intermediate section.

Preferably, the connector member is generally I-shaped in profile having a central web connecting opposed pairs of bilaterally projecting arms, at least one set of arms having the expandible slot so that upon axial movement of the expander in the slot, the set of arms are biased toward the other set of arms.

The connector member is typically shaped or configured to match the body that is located adjacent the intermediate section. The connector member may have two or more ends, all the ends may have slots and corresponding expanders.

In one embodiment the connector member is a short plug the expander is a grub screw. In another embodiment the connector member is a long strip and the connector member is a rod driven onto the slot.

Preferably, the connector member is an elongate strip, the enlarged ends extending along opposite edges of the strip, the enlarged ends on at least one edge being separated by gaps, the expander comprising a rod having spaced enlargements each functioning as connector expanders, the enlargements on the rod being separated by narrower regions that initially locate in the expandable slots and upon axial movement of the rod the enlargements move into the slots to expand the slots.

The T-shaped ends preferably include peripheral longitudinal beading that contacts the body. The connector member preferably has arms projecting from the narrow intermediate section, there being a juncture between the arms and the intermediate section, there being a small slot at the juncture of the arms being adapted to close or partially close as the arms are biased. Each arm preferably has a bead extending along an edge of the arm, the bead providing a focal line for the bias.

The expander may be a pin, screw, rod or other means. The expander may comprise a single expander or multiple expanders. The expander may have expander

section separated by narrow non-expander sections and be located wholly within the connector member until driven into expanding position by an expander displacer.

The connector members may be short or long.

The expander may be one way or reversible so that the connector member may
5 release the body held when the expander is reversed. As a consequence application of the expander may vary. Where the expander is, for example, a grub screw it may be applied and reversed using a conventional tool. The expander may be driven by a hammer from one end and reversed by operation from its opposite end by driving a rod or screw into the opposite end of the slot.

10 Preferably, the expander has tapered enlargements, the tapered enlargement preferably being tapered at opposite ends, so that the expander is reversible. The enlargement may be fluted to reduce friction.

In a preferred application of the invention there is provided in combination a modular window system comprising window modules and a window module connector
15 system, each window module having slotted outer frame members, the connector system comprising an elongate connector member and a connector member expander, the connector member being adapted to retentively engage the slots in the slotted members upon application of the expander to the connector member.

In another invention there is provided an improved window frame assembly
20 having a sash, a sill and a seal disposed between the sash and sill, the seal having a section adjacent a lower edge of the window assembly, the sill and sash having complimentary lower marginal sections outboard of said seal and extending along at least the lower edge of the window assembly, the lower marginal sections defining there between an inclined water flow passage means, the water flow passage means being
25 downwardly inclined from a position adjacent said seal to the edge of the window

assembly. This window frame assembly may be utilised in the modular window system described herein.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

In order that the present inventions may be more readily understood and be put
5 into practical effect reference will now be made to the accompanying drawings which illustrate preferred embodiments, and one application of the connector system as applied to a modular window system, it will be appreciated that the connector system has general application and wherein:

Figures 1A, 1B and 1C are schematic drawings illustrating a connector system
10 as applied to modular windows and employing in profile a dove tail shaped connector member;

Figure 2 and Figure 3 are drawings of part sections through lower marginal sections of typical window assemblies;

Figure 4 is a schematic drawing illustrating the arrangement of modules typical
15 in the applicant's modular window system;

Figures 5 and 6 illustrate a further embodiment employing in profile an I-shaped connector member;

Figures 7 to 9 illustrate different expanders;

Figures 10 to 12 illustrate operation of the connector in a panel edge to edge
20 operation;

Figures 13A and 13B illustrate operation of a short connector in a side by side panel arrangement;

Figure 14 is a profile of a four ended connector;

Figure 15 is a profile of a three ended connector;

25 Figure 16 is a profile of a hinge connector;

Figures 17 and 18 are drawings illustrating typical tools for applying the expander using a hammer action;

Figure 19 is a drawing illustrating a gear assembly for applying the expander in situations where axial tool access is not available;

5 Figures 20 and 21 are drawings illustrating a setup for pulling an expander into position rather than pushing;

Figures 22 to 25 are drawings illustrating various connector member profiles; and

Figure 26 is a section showing external application of the connector.

10 METHOD OF PERFORMANCE

The following description deals with application of the connector system to external windows where the ability of the connector system to draw the two parts being connected together is considered beneficial. It will be apparent however that the connector has general application and the following description is non-limiting.

15 Referring to the drawings and initially to Figures 1A to 1C there is illustrated a modular window system employing window modules 10 and 11 which may be connected together to form a modular assembly 12. Each module has spaced dovetail slots 13 and 14 which are positioned in confronting relation as shown in the inset of Figure 1B and the modules are retained together by connectors 15 engaged in the slots. A typical
20 connector is illustrated in exploded form at 15 in Figure 1C.

The connector 15 comprises a plastics connector member 16, an expander rod 17 and a threaded expander rod displacer 18. The connector member 16 has spaced dovetail style enlargements 19 on one side and a full length dovetail enlargement 20 on the other side. The connector member is designed to slide in the confronting slots 13
25 and 14 with the wasted sections 21 of the expander 17 located inside each of the sections 19. Once in position the threaded expander rod displacer 18 is used to axially

displace the expander 17 to force the enlarged sections 22 of the expander 17 into the sections 19. This has the effect of not only engaging the slot but at the same time of biasing the modules together.

It will be appreciated that the connector parts may be of any shape and configuration that is able to achieve the mechanically equivalent function described.

Figure 2 and 3 illustrate two different modules being a lower section of a double hung window at 24 and typical awning and casement window section at 25. Common to these is the sloping section 26 of the sill 27 outboard of a seal 28. In each case a sash 29 is complimentary with the sill 27.

Figure 4 illustrates typical modules and modular assemblies that may be made using the teachings of the present invention.

Figures 5 and 6 illustrate a further embodiment adapted to a different shaped slotted profile, the connector member 30 in this case is I-shaped and operates with an expander as described. The slotted members that are connected together have confronting T-shaped slots corresponding to half the profile of the connector member. Figure 6 illustrates the way arms 31 and 32 are biased inwardly (unexpanded position in phantom) under the influence of the expander.

Figures 7 to 9 show expanders 33, 17 and 34 respectively. The expanders 33 and 34 have a double taper at 35 and 36 to enable reversal should one want to disconnect. The expander 17 is less easy to reverse and the slots 37 in Figure 4 may be moulded with a small catch to engage shoulder 38 in order to prevent or inhibit reversal. The expander 34 has fluted and double tapered enlargements. This limits friction and is particularly suited to longer embodiments.

Figures 10 to 11 show the connector assembled in slotted panels 38 and 39, the panels 38 and 39 have T-shaped slots routed in the edges so that the resulting combination corresponds in profile to a marginally larger than the connector 30 but still

a workable fit. The expander is in place in Figure 10 in its release position. Figures 11 and 12 show the application of the threaded expander displacer 18. The connector member has arms 31,32,40 and 44. Each arm has a bead 45, arms 31 and 32 at the juncture of the arms 31 and 32 with the web 46 has small slots 47. The slots are in the corner, the effect of the small slots 47 is to limit the material resistance to the arms assuming the inward retentive action shown in Figure 12 while the beads provide focal lines for the applied bias force.

Figure 13A illustrates a short connector member 48 having the same profile as connector 30 but does not utilise the long expander, rather it uses a grub screw as the expander. Correspondingly short slots 50 and 51 in panels 52 and 53 may be employed as illustrated in Figure 13B.

Figure 14 is a profile of a four ended connector 54, it has T-shaped ends 55,56,57 and 58 which are each effectively the same configuration as the deformable ends of the connector 30. It will be clear that the edges of four panels may be connected in a cross shape with adjacent panels at 90 degrees. In Figure 15 connector 59 has three ends 60,61 and 62 and but would have the panels at 120 degrees.

The versatility of the invention is dramatically illustrated by Figures 16 and 19. Figure 16 is a hinge connector 63. In this case a hinge with a pin at 64 is formed in the usual way but is retained in the slots shown in phantom by the present invention. Two set of non-flexing arms 65 are added to improve the gripping action although only the flexing arms 66 are required. The size of the panels supported may dictate the number of arms required.

Figures 17 and 18 illustrate driving methods to apply the expander or expander displacer.

Figure 19 illustrates a gear assembly 67 of the rack and pinion type which may be used in situation where axial access to drive the expander is not available as might

be the case between floors. In this case the expanders have threaded ends 68 and are permanently coupled to the racks 69 so they may be pulled or pushed and the panels may be released later. Figures 20 and 21 illustrate a pulling action to apply the expander similar to a rivet tool. Figures 22-25 illustrate variations in profile for different applications. Figure 26 illustrates external use of the invention.

Whilst the above has been given by way of illustrative example many variations and modifications will be apparent to those skilled in the art without departing from the broad ambit and scope of the invention as herein set forth in the appended claims.